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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 CONAKRY 001023

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: DIVISIVE STRATEGIES AMIDST RUMBLINGS OF POLITICAL
DISSATISFACTION

REF: A. A) CONAKRY 991

[1](#)B. B) CONAKRY 992

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Rumbings of political discontent have become increasingly audible in recent weeks throughout Guinea, spurring a spate of demonstrations, meetings, and public debate. These various events serve as a backdrop to troublesome political maneuverings, slanderous rumors, and potentially divisive stratagems. Political and civil society actors are defining positions, which seem to focus largely on whether people are pro-change, pro-Kouyate, or both. END SUMMARY.

PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS THROUGHOUT GUINEA

[1](#)2. (U) Following the majority political party PUP,s (Party for Unity and Progress) rally on August 17, which was widely interpreted as &anti-change,8 numerous civil society organizations across the country have been maneuvering to raise their visibility and define political alignments. In addition to the PUP rally and the August 25 civil society youth rally (reftels), unions demonstrated in front of the Bourse du Travail on September 4, civil society organizations demonstrated in regional capitals throughout the country on September 6, and youth groups mobilized to form a National Youth Council (although this meeting reportedly did not take place on September 5 as planned). There have also been a few small, unorganized demonstrations in Conakry protesting the general population,s lack of access to electricity and running water.

RUMORS OF BRIBES TO CIVIL SOCIETY

[1](#)3. (C) Poloff met individually with Naby Diakite, Official Spokesperson for the National Council for Civil Society Organizations of Guinea (CNOSCG) on August 29; Bakary Fofana, Vice President for Economic Affairs for the CNOSCG on August 30; and Ben Sekou Syllah, President of the CNOSCG on September 6. All three are long-time contacts of the Embassy who are either current or former collaborators on USAID funded programs.

[1](#)4. (S) Recently, local press reported rumors of bribes offered by Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate,s government to various civil society representatives as an incentive to mobilize public support for Kouyate. Diakite said a number of possible recipients had been named, including Bakary Fofana (CNOSCG), Dr. Ibrahim Fofana, head of the USTG (Labor Union of Guinean Workers), and Elhadja Sera Rabiadou, head of the CNTG (National Confederation of Guinean Workers).

Diakite added that he doubts most of them accepted bribes, but a few may have done so. Ben Syllah privately confided to poloff that Kouyate had personally offered to provide financial support to the CNOSCG, which Syllah interpreted as an indirect bribe. Syllah added that he knows certain union members accepted money, but would not name names. However, Syllah said that Rabiattou intentionally boycotted the September 4 union demonstration because she saw the message as &too pro-Kouyate.8

15. (S) With respect to the National Council for Youth event that was scheduled for September 5, Syllah said that Kouyate provided financing to various youth organizations as an incentive to rally support for his government. Syllah said that when Kouyate recently renovated his office, he gave the contract to his nephew without opening the contract to competition. According to Syllah, Kouyate then gave additional money (Syllah said about USD 24,000) to this same nephew with instructions to organize youth groups and establish a National Council of Youth that would be pro-Kouyate. Sylla added that Kouyate has also had cigarette lighters, hats, and pens made with his name on them to be handed out to supporters (Note) Embassy officials have not seen such articles).

MANIPULATING ETHNICITY FOR POLITICAL GAIN

16. (C) Syllah said he finds the organization of youth groups particularly disturbing as such civil society movements should naturally begin at the grassroots level. In addition, Syllah said that as the youth groups organize politically, they are splitting the population along ethnic lines. According to Syllah, there is now an association of youth

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organizations that support President Conte and are largely Soussou; another group represented by opposition political parties, which is primarily Peuhl; and a larger group supporting Kouyate that is mostly Malinke. Diakite echoed concerns of divisions along ethnic lines, saying that political forces are manipulating ethnicity in order to build bases of support.

SUSPICIONS OF NEFARIOUS CONNECTIONS

17. (S) Diakite also pointed to links between Kouyate and controversial millionaire Mamadou Syllah. He said that during the state of siege in January and February, Kouyate contacted Diakite and proposed a meeting. When Mamadou Syllah,s brother later called Diakite and said it would be held at Mamadou Syllah,s residence, Diakite said he refused to go. He added that during the January/February tripartite negotiations, civil society organizations were under a great deal of pressure to propose and accept Kouyate as Prime Minister. According to Diakite, the only reason the labor unions put forth Kouyate,s name was because President Conte,s wife, Henriette Conte, suggested the name to CNTG head Rabiattou.

PRO-CHANGE OR PRO-KOUYATE?

18. (C) While civil society organizations have been very active in recent weeks, Diakite said that within the CNOSCG, civil society is increasingly fragmented. According to Diakite, there are a number of groups who continue to support Kouyate, but there is a growing number of groups that support the concept of change rather than Kouyate per se. Diakite added that Kouyate is confused about his support base and thinks that he embodies the change people seek when in fact, if he does not deliver on his mandate, the people will not

hesitate to remove him. &When we put him there, we were looking to recreate a system of government, not a single person institution.⁸ Referring to the shared first name of the Prime Minister and the President, Diakite added &we don,t want to exchange one Lansana for another Lansana.⁸

¶9. (C) Ben Syllah echoed Diakite,s comments when he told poloff that Kouyate was put in place by the people. &We are calling his administration the consensus government, but in fact, there is no consensus,⁸ Syllah said. He added that Kouyate has failed to adequately consult with the unions, party leaders and civil society organizations that put him in power and who ultimately, will not hesitate to remove him if he cannot do the job. Syllah emphasized that after six months in office, Kouyate has failed to deliver results: &There is no progress on elections, there is no commission to investigate human rights abuses committed during the siege, and there is no progress on basic public services.⁸

¶10. (C) Ben Syllah expressed disappointment and frustration with the Kouyate government, saying that he has lost faith and no longer trusts him. He said &we feel like we have been tricked.⁸ Syllah added that he does not believe that Kouyate can recover from his inability to effect change over the last six months. In a private meeting with Kouyate, Syllah said he told the Prime Minister that he must act authoritatively on key issues in order to avoid further unrest.

¶11. (U) Fofana was more circumspect in his meeting with poloff, stating that Kouyate has made mistakes, but that there is still a possibility he can fulfill his agenda. Fofana organized a technical committee meeting the week of September 4 to discuss a forward strategy for engaging the government (Reftel B).

COMMENT

¶12. (C) While there is no confirmation that certain individuals accepted bribes, the fact that people suspect they did could become a divisive element within civil society. Political activity in recent weeks suggests that the population is becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. Some contacts tell poloff that Kouyate could still succeed if he focuses on key initiatives: elections, investigation into human rights abuses, and improved public services. Other contacts indicate that Kouyate has lost his momentum and popular support, which he may not be able to recover from. To date, no contacts have mentioned discussions of possible strikes or mass

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demonstrations in the near-term.
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